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ABSTRACT

Incorporating an understanding of different varieties of English (particularly Cajun English) and the appropriateness of their use into the language arts curriculum can help speakers of dialects understand the origins of their language and the significance it plays in their lives. Educators who work with students who use Cajun English need to be open to understanding the cultural biases associated with any dialect. A review of research on Cajun English indicates that (1) phonetically, the most distinguishing characteristic is the replacement of the voiceless and the voiced interdental fricatives with the voiceless and voiced alveolar stops /t/ and /d/, the general lack of some diphthongs, and the use of suprasegmental phonemes that differ from Southern or Standard English; (2) the strongest syntactic element is found in the formation of tag questions; (3) Cajun English has a lexicon particular to the dialect; (4) the dialect is an ethnic marker for Cajuns; (5) social attitudes towards the dialect have changed from negative connotations towards speakers of the dialect to a more tolerant acceptance; and (6) the origins of the dialect are well understood as a by-product of Louisiana educational and constitutional law in the early part of the 20th century. While there are some points of disagreement among researchers, all seem to come to the conclusion that Cajun English is an interesting and significant American dialect. (Contains four notes and 48 references.) (RS)

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"Glad You Axed": A Teacher's Guide to Cajun English

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ED 420 881

In order to understand the current language issues concerning educators in Louisiana, it is necessary to first look at the past work performed in language studies in our state. Cajun English, in particular, has a long history of scholarly study and publication. This dialect is spoken primarily in the southern part of Louisiana by native Louisianians of white, French Acadian descent. As educators, our interest in Cajun English stems from a need to understand the origins of a student's language and the reasons for the student's language use. By looking at the particulars of a student's dialect (for example, by familiarizing ourselves with the phonological or syntactical characteristics of the dialect), we can devise methodologies that can incorporate the dialect into the student's language studies. The examination of previous research in Cajun English can give us an impression of the characteristics of this dialect, point out areas for future research, and guide us in the development of methodologies for language instruction.

Most of the studies of Cajun English were not performed for the use of educators, but began as observations of word use that differed from norms in other parts of the United States. In *The American Language*, H.L. Mencken's extensive description of English use in the United States, Mencken notes the earliest mention of English in south Louisiana is by John Russell Bartlett in the second edition of *Glossary of Words and Phrases Usually Regarded as Peculiar to the United States*, a work published in Boston in 1859. In the preface to this work, Bartlett comments on the French derivation of words used in Louisiana for geographical placenames, terms for soil conditions and climate, and names for flora and fauna (qtd. in Mencken 154). The influence of French on English has been the subject of much of the linguistic on Cajun English. But, like Bartlett, early researchers in Cajun English mainly compiled word lists such as those found in *Dialect Notes*, an early publication of the American Dialect Society. One of the first such lists, dated 1890, does not mention any terms that seem to come from South Louisiana, or have French derivation, but it does note the pronunciation of *"axe"* and *"axed"* for *ask* and *asked*, which

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are "[c]ommon among the ignorant, particularly those of English descent. It of course [sic] dates back to Anglo-Saxon days" (Pearce 71). These pronunciations are still prevalent in South Louisiana, as is seen in Ann Martin Scott's article, "Some Phonological and Syntactic Characteristics of Cajun English," discussed below. However, other word lists submitted to *Dialect Notes* include French derived words such as: *armoir*, *bayou*, *dos gris*, *gris-gris*, *jambalaya*, *Mardi Gras* (referring to a street masker), *pirogue*, *pool-doo* (*poule d'eau*), *nanan* (godmother), *parin* (godfather), *boucan* (smudge to keep off mosquitos; derived from Cajun French *boucane* meaning "smoke"), *brulée* (open place in the swamp), *marronguin* (large mosquito), *coulie* (a little bayou; derived from *coulée*), *flottant* (soft prairie with water underneath), and *raquecha* (cockleburr; a Creole who is conservative in temperament [derogatory]) (Reidel 268-70; Routh, "Gleanings" 243-44; Routh, "Louisiana" 396; Routh, "Terms" 420).

While such lists do not contain much effort by the writers to discern the origins of the words, these lists began the study of Cajun English and do give current researchers a look at how long such terms have existed in the English of the area. Research in the area of word lists and lexical data continued later in the century with work such as Viron Barnhill's 1950 thesis *A Linguistic Atlas Type Investigation in Western Louisiana* which surveys lexical items that are borrowed or influenced by French and English speakers in southwest Louisiana. In his research, Barnhill surveys a number of western parishes to find the type of words borrowed and the geographic area in which the borrowing is found. While not all of the parishes Barnhill studied are Acadiana parishes (implying some French language influence), his goal is to determine how far the French borrowings have progressed geographically. Barnhill finds that the distribution of French borrowings reflects the settlement history of the area and concludes that most borrowed French terms in the northern parishes tend to be food words. He further concludes that the Natchitoches area is a "relic" area, retaining some of its French predominance in the midst of increased Anglo-American influence, while Alexandria is a transition area where French borrowings are occurring with greater frequency than in other Anglo-American settlement areas in North and Central Louisiana.

As the research in word lists progressed, researchers began looking at other characteristics of Cajun English such as pronunciation and phonology. Works such as Jack Reynolds' thesis, "The Pronunciation of English in Southern Louisiana" and Harley Smith's dissertation "A Recording of English Sounds at Three Age Levels in Ville Platte, Louisiana," note differences between the pronunciation of vowels and consonants between the speakers of South Louisiana and Southern English or Standard American English. These researchers remark on the similarities between Southern English and the pronunciations they find in South Louisiana and comment on some of the phonological features that have come to be identified as particular to English in South Louisiana such as the "dentalization of consonants," the replacement of the voiceless and the voiced interdental fricatives (/θ/ and /ð/) with the voiceless and voiced alveolar stops /t/ and /d/, and the use of long French vowels. These three features become a primary concern of researchers and come to be considered primary phonological characteristics of the dialect.

A much later work, August Rubrecht's 1971 dissertation "Regional Phonological Variants in Louisiana Speech," examines the phonological characteristics of native Louisiana English speakers in great detail by recording interviews conducted with informants from across the state. Rubrecht refers to the English spoken in the French areas of Louisiana (what Rubrecht calls "French Louisiana" to distinguish it from North Louisiana) as "picturesque," and comments that the children of native French speakers in the area ". . . have less French accent [than their parents], but share phonology, syntax, and intonation which mark the English of French Louisiana as distinctive" (25). In his detailed analysis of phonological variants in Louisiana, Rubrecht does discover some items that are found in South Louisiana and not elsewhere in the state. First, he notes that the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables is not as pronounced in South Louisiana as it is in North Louisiana. Also, he quotes his North Louisiana informants as saying that ". . . Acadian English is 'more musical' than their own speech and that it 'has a different rhythm'," obviously a reference to the suprasegmental phonemes associated with Cajun English by other researchers (149). In examining consonants, Rubrecht supplies evidence supporting the use

of dental variants of alveolar stops /t/ and /d/ for the interdental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ in initial and post positions (151). Free vowels, except for /ay, aw, oy/, are monophthongized in South Louisiana, especially /e/ and /o/ (238). Rubrecht finds that South Louisiana informants do not lower /I/ before /y/; do not shift /A/ to /U/; and do not upglide /æ/ as do the North Louisiana informants (238). Rubrecht's conclusions show that there is a phonological difference between the speech of North and South Louisiana, and that the phonological characteristics of South Louisiana have not spread outside the region (237).

In a more advanced use of word lists, Albert George combines his search for differences between "southern, general American, mountain, and Louisiana French-English ('Cajun') dialects" (v) with an examination of dialect features by using word lists to interview his in informants, in his thesis, "Some Louisiana Isoglosses, Based on the Workbooks of the Louisiana Dialect Atlas." Utilizing the data he collected, George prepared isoglosses (maps of areas where a particular dialect feature is found) for the state of Louisiana and concluded that there are four dialects in Louisiana. One of the four dialects is described as "French-colored English," which George calls "Cajun" (130). George describes Cajun English as "that type of English spoken in those parts of Louisiana that have a predominantly French cultural background, and a heritage of the French language long antedating the use of English" (130-31) following notion of other researchers that Cajun English is French influenced. Of interest in George's thesis is use of the term "French" to refer not to the language, but to the "accent" he hears accompanying the use of English. Like Reynolds and Smith, George notes the use among Cajuns of the voiceless alveolar stop /t/ for the voiceless interdental fricative /θ/, the voiced alveolar stop /d/ for the voiced interdental fricative /ð/. Other characteristics of Cajun English that George records are the dentalization of alveolar sounds, a rhythm pattern different from other English speakers interviewed, and a distinctive pattern of idioms (138-39). In the isoglosses, George indicates the area in which Cajun dialect occurs as an area extending from the Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes in the southeast to Avoyelles and Evangeline parishes in the south central part of the state (141–44).

During the later part of the 1950s, after George noted that Cajun English could be found in the Lafourche-Terrebonne area, Mima Babington began collecting data concerning word usage in a six parish area in Southeast Louisiana (Babington and Atwood 1). Entitled "Lexical Usage in Southern Louisiana," the article examines lexical use of informants from the area in comparison to word usage by speakers of other dialects documented in *The Regional Vocabulary of Texas* and Hans Kurath's *Word Geography of the Eastern United States* (4-8). The worksheets used in the Louisiana study are based on worksheets of the Linguistic Atlas studies and "Worksheets for Vocabulary Collection" that E. Bagby Atwood, Babington's mentor, used in Texas (3). Descriptions were added to elicite responses that are considered particular to South Louisiana like *bagasse, poule d'eau, bisque, gris gris*, etc.

Babington and Atwood's data indicate that the Louisiana informants use few dialectical terms that are found in the Northern, Midland, and Southern dialects (Babington and Atwood 4-8). This information clearly indicates that South Louisiana informants share few regional terms with other areas, although they do share the most with the Southern English dialect. Babington and Atwood find a large number of the words used by informants tend to have French origins, but the authors emphasize that "the ones which show a considerable frequency are widely used in the *English* [authors' emphasis] of the area, and are not *ad hoc* carry-overs from French resulting from ignorance of the appropriate English term" (11-12). In other words, these terms are intentionally used by the speakers, although they know the English term. Atwood and Babington also find that such terms have different pronunciations depending upon the degree of anglicization. What is especially interesting is that their data seem to indicate that their younger informants are not abandoning the words of French origin: if the word is useful, it seems to be kept in usage (14-15).

Continuing the work of Babington and Atwood, Nolan Philip LeCompte, Jr., performed lexical surveys with residents in Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes during the 1960s in an effort to create word atlases of both parishes. LeCompte performed the first survey as part of his Master's thesis, entitled "A Word Atlas of Terrebonne Parish," at Louisiana State University. He continued the survey in his dissertation, "A Word Atlas of Lafourche Parish and Grand Isle,

Louisiana." LeCompte finds a "trend. . . toward a greater fluency in English" among his informants, although many of his informants retain the knowledge and use of French. He calls those informants who use both French and English the "transitional generation"; their children are not bilingual--or not as bilingual as their parents. In examining the interplay of French and English in the data gathered, LeCompte notes that French words have become part of the area's English, and informants find the construction of sentences that mix French and English natural. LeCompte lists five (5) reasons for the "interlingual construction" of French and English found among his informants:

1. The informants substitute French words for English when the English words are unknown.
2. The informants use a French word when that word has more common usage in the community than the English word.
3. The informants believe the French word is "better"-- the connotations of the French word are not found in the English word.
4. The informants prefer French expletives.
5. The informants use French terms as an attempt at humor. ("Terrebonne" 22-23)

LeCompte describes the linguistic change in the area as moving from a French "patois" to a "bastardized" French-English to "illiterate" English to dialectical English ("Lafourche" 29-30). Morphemic features listed include what seems to be a disregard for standard inflectional morphemes, especially the pluralizing *-s*. LeCompte notes that this may be caused by the fact that while French does use *-s* to pluralize nouns in writing, the suffix is not pronounced in spoken French ("Lafourche" 32).

LeCompte notes structures that seem to be loan translations (calques) from French which fall into two categories: pronoun emphasis and tags. Pronoun emphasis refers to the tendency of the informants to add a pronoun to the sentence in reference to the subject to emphasize the subject, as in *What are you doing, you?*, which is a translation of the French construction, *Qu'est-ce que vous faites, vous?* ("Terrebonne" 24). The regional French of the area also uses *oui* and *non* as tags for emphasis, which LeCompte's informants translate into English, as in phrases like *I don't care, no*. The second structural influence LeCompte notes is the literal translation of French idioms. In this case, French idioms of the area such as *attraper la pluie* and *attraper le pont* are translated as *to catch the rain* and *to catch a bridge*. Many idiom translations use the verb *faire*,

some of which become slightly corrupted or altered in translation, as in *He made his lessons*, translated from *Il fait ses leçons* ("Terrebonne" 25). LeCompte notes that many of the French terms used in Cajun English fall into specific categories: flora and fauna, local geography, local foods, social customs, and arcane items. Because of the specificity of these terms and their frequent use, LeCompte feels that these terms will be retained in the dialect ("Lafourche" 58). Overall, LeCompte finds education to be the greatest influence on vocabulary use in Lafourche parish, concluding that education and Americanization are causing the dialect of the area to become more like Standard English.

In an effort to document the features of Cajun English, both C.M. (Claude Merton) Wise, a professor of speech at Louisiana State University (LSU), and Raven I McDavid, Jr., a well-known researcher in southern dialects, published descriptions of Cajun English. In 1957, C.M. Wise published *Applied Phonetics*, a textbook intended to introduce students to the International Phonetic Alphabet by using it to present the characteristics of different dialects of English (3-4). "French," part four, chapter seventeen of the work, includes a section on "Louisiana French-English," in which Wise discusses how this dialect, also referred to as "Cajan" or "Cajun," is a part of "Southern American Speech" (354-550). Wise finds the English of the Cajuns to be affected by French sound patterns making it similar to the English of French-Canadians or French immigrants. Yet, there are differences in that Southern American English is the English basis for Cajun English. And, according to Wise, as Cajuns are the least educated of the French population, they associate with the least educated non-French population, which leads them to be influenced by "substandard Southern American English" (355).[1] Wise records some phonetic characteristics of Cajun speech showing how these are either influenced by Southern speech or French. However, what is most interesting is Wise's discussion of stress and pitch (suprasegmental phonemes). Wise comments on the production of French using tenser lips and more active movement of the musculature of the mouth. This gives French sentences little stress, yet makes French fall into phrases which seem to create long words.

Raven I. McDavid, Jr., collected some information on Cajun English while teaching at the Southwestern Louisiana Institute (University of Southwestern Louisiana) in Lafayette. McDavid's first article on the subject of dialect in Louisiana is "Opportunities for Dialect Research in Louisiana," a short publication in *Louisiana Schools* that is an explanation of the need and opportunities for dialect research in the state. While Cajun English is not specifically mentioned, McDavid creates a short list of the diverse dialect communities in the area, mentioning "at least two French areas of settlement--the Creole and the Acadian" ("Opportunities" 10). McDavid also lists numerous ways teachers can help in collecting information concerning dialect, by having students perform term projects that collect lexicons for occupations or communities, and by examining the writing of students for "orthographical and morphological peculiarities." McDavid states that collecting evidence from student papers is "valuable pedagogically in illustrating the problems a student faces in learning socially privileged English" (11). Two more articles, "American Social Dialects," published in *College English* in 1965, and "Dialect Differences and the Teaching of English," published in the *Louisiana English Journal* in 1967, follow in much the same vein as "Opportunites," explaining to the reader the need to understand the dialect and language use of an area before instruction of Standard English can adequately take place.

McDavid explains some of the characteristics of Cajun English in the article "Some Notes on Acadian English," found in a National Council of Teachers of English publication entitled *Culture, Class, and Language*. In listing his observations of "Acadian English," McDavid writes that intonation, stress, and rhythm differ from the standard, with statements ending with higher pitch and with weak-stressed syllables being lost. As do most researchers, McDavid records the modification of the interdental fricatives ("Notes" 186). In listing syntactic differences, McDavid records the lack of inflectional suffixes on nouns and verbs and the absence of copula or linking verbs, as in the example he cites: "He so dronk he tink he me" (187). McDavid claims that some lexical idiosyncrasies in Cajun English can be connected to French words which designate "flora, fauna, cuisine, and general culture" (187); others he notes as loan translations as in *make a pass for*. McDavid ends this article with a short paragraph in which he suggests teachers use second

language instruction for students with this vernacular, speculating that "Acadian English" may result from a form of "general creolizing" (187).

Another effort to publish the features of Cajun English is found in an ERIC (Educational Research Information Center) document, "A Study of the Linguistic Features of Cajun English," by Jaunita Cox, which endeavors to familiarize educators with the characteristics of "Acadian (Cajun) English" ("Features" 1). Cox describes Cajun English using three categories: pronunciation (phonology); grammar (syntax); and vocabulary (lexicon). These descriptions are performed in listings in comparison to the local standard English. Cox's data were collected from taped sessions with school children in grades kindergarten through twelve (12), interviews with teachers in Southwest Louisiana, and works of Cajun authors. The listing of phonological, grammatical, and lexical features is presented in a simplified format. The "Grammatical Features" and "Lexical Differences" sections are not very revealing. Cox provides no detailed explanations for the development of any of these features, stating simply in her conclusion that these features seem "to be a direct result of the French which is the native language of the Acadian" ("Features" 9).

Other published works on Cajun English cover a number of different topics. J.L. Dillard's 1985 book, *Toward a Social History of American English*, mentions characteristics of English spoken by Cajuns in the chapter on "Immigrants." Giving a short history of the immigration of the Acadians from Nova Scotia to Louisiana, the author remarks on the variety of French-speaking immigrants who settled in South Louisiana (106). In discussing English use among Cajuns, Dillard notes the humorous pronunciations and malapropisms that have pervaded the media, mentioning the popular comedian Justin Wilson and James Sothern's *Cajun Dictionary*. Dillard, however, claims such materials as "far from descriptive" (107), and finds there to be few academic sources available on the dialect.

In a later work in 1989, "Dialectology in Our Time? The English of the Cajuns," J.L. Dillard, in conjunction with his cowriter Shirley A. Rivers, endeavors to present the importance of French to the development of English in the area by looking at current uses of Cajun English in

print in area newspapers and published literature. Dillard and Rivers claim "impressions" from their study of this information, although they are not clear as to what their impressions are. They test their "impressions," however, by taking eight expressions (such as *make groceries* and *stay still*) that they consider are derived from Cajun French and presenting them to seventy-six (76) Cajun respondents with multiple choice answers, one answer being the meaning they believe is used by Cajun speakers of English. The results of the investigation demonstrate that regardless of demographic factors, a significant number of informants select the Cajun French influenced interpretations. Dillards and Rivers do have a disclaimer when discussing their results, stating that they "do not interpret [their] results as making the case for French having a direct, straightforward interfering effect on the English of the Cajuns" (314).

An article published in 1982 in *Anthropological Linguistics*, "Bilingualism in Southern Louisiana," by Margaret M. Marshall, examines the speech of Vacherie, Louisiana, a community located on the western bank of the Mississippi located upstream from New Orleans and below Baton Rouge. Marshall discusses the linguistic diversity of the community, concentrating primarily on the three varieties of French spoken in the area. However, in her study of the linguistic characteristics of the area, Marshall notes the influence of the French sound system on what she terms "Acadian English," claiming the influence to be "substantial" (314). All the speakers Marshall interviewed see English as more practical and prestigious, and are determined that their children will learn English to be able communicate outside the community. Like other researchers, Marshal describes an absence of diphthongs that she claims is accompanied by "an overall impression of tenseness in the vowels and consonants that is uncharacteristic of American English speech in Louisiana of those who have had no contact with French" (314). She also records the loss of the interdental fricatives replaced with the alveolar stops, and emphasizes the fact that French does not have interdental fricatives (Marshall 314). Final consonants also seem to be affected, with speakers dropping final consonants and final consonant clusters, as in *sometimes* /sʌmtɑm/, *last* /læs/, *best* /bɛs/. In examining syntax, Marshall comments that she finds that the English syntax of these speakers is influenced by French. In examining question formation,

Marshall notes that "subject pronouns are not postposed," meaning that the verb and pronoun do not exchange position when an interrogative word is added: "How she writes dat?" and "What else you have?" (314). In examining verbs, Marshall observes a tendency to use the third person singular verb form with plural nouns: "Momma and Daddy speaks French" (315). Marshall completes the article with a discussion of the semantic influence of French on English in the area commenting on the translation of *faire* into "make" and "do." This brings about such constructions as "I made $200 worth of damage" and "to make groceries" (316). Marshall also notes the use of loan translations, or calques, although Marshall does not give clear examples of this.

Like Marshall, Rebecca (Becky) Brown often notes observations about the English her Cajun French informants use. For example, in her article "Cajun English Code-Switching: A Test of Formal Models," published in 1987, Brown finds that "French interference is evident in their [her informants'] English," and cites specimens such as "He went *in* France" (from Standard French: *en France*), and "I love gumbo, *cher*" ("Code-Switching" 400). Brown also indicates that she is aware of the fact that Cajun children were not allowed to speak Cajun French at school because of the Louisiana Constitution of 1921. She feels that it is because of this action by the state that English became the predominant home language, and Cajun French became a secondary language in Cajun families, if it is used at all. Brown's dissertation, "Pronomial Equivalence in a Variable Syntax," continues her work in Cajun French, and her observations of Cajun English. In this work Brown calls Cajun English a "regional variety . . . locally called *americain, anglais,* or *anglish*" ("Pronomial" 44). Brown describes the Cajun English dialect heard in public media such as television and films as a caricature as the media representation is heavily influenced by the phonology of Cajun English, but does not contain the syntax; media versions of Cajun English use a syntax more reminiscent of African American English or Southern English. Brown considers Cajun English to be the "mother tongue of the monolingual younger generation," and the second language of the older bilingual generation who learned it for survival. She finds the social status of Cajun English speakers to be similar to that of African American English speakers, with her informants telling stories of being ostracized in Anglo-American communities because of their

dialect. According to Brown, Cajun English is replacing Cajun French as an ethnic marker for Cajuns in the south.

Brown's discussion of the social status of Cajun English parallels concerns first addressed by Gwendolyn Carpenter, a master's student in Louisiana State University's Department of Speech. Carpenter approaches the study of Cajun English differently from her predecessors in her thesis "Social Dialects in Louisiana" by performing an attitude investigation of Louisiana natives to see if they can determine the difference between two non-standard dialects in the state. Carpenter's hypotheses are that:

1. The majority of Louisiana natives cannot identify the difference between the dialects of an African American speaker and a Cajun speaker.
2. The attitude of native Louisianians to the competence of these two speakers is the same, and
3. The attitude of native Louisianians to the trustworthiness of these two speakers is also the same. (11)

Carpenter uses samples of spontaneous speech based on the answer to the same question instead of passages read aloud. This, she hopes, will elicit more "natural" speech from the sample speakers. The sample speakers were chosen from four (4) samples of each type, African American and Cajun, by a board of professors in the Department of Speech. A class of fifty-nine (59) senior business students were selected to listen to the tapes and fill out a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of a short form to determine if the student was a Louisiana native, and a series of twelve (12) adjective pairs (for example, "knowledgeable - not knowledgeable") with a seven (7) point scale between the pairs. Six (6) of the pairs were based on authoritativeness, six (6) on character (13-16). Seventy-eight (78) percent of the Louisiana natives did not recognize the difference between the two speakers, and this group showed a slight preference for the African American speaker. Of the smaller percentage of natives who did recognize the difference between the two speakers, the preference for the African American speaker is increased (21-22). Carpenter's results seem to indicate that the participants in the study thought more highly of the African American speaker than the Cajun speaker. To Carpenter these results support the idea that listeners who are sensitive to dialect variations of their own language may have stereotyped conceptions of the personalities of the speakers of dialects. Another conclusion that Carpenter draws is that speakers

of a Cajun dialect are more disadvantaged in Louisiana than speakers of a African American dialect (22-23).

Another article that examines social attitude towards Cajun english is Juanita Cox's ERIC document, "The Cajun Child in the Educative Process," which reports on the results of a questionnaire she submitted to K-12 teachers in the South Louisiana area to determine the learning style, language and experiential background, reading achievement, parental attitude and support, and "any unique interest and beliefs of the children of which teachers should be aware" ("Educative" 1). Results from the survey find that Cajun English speaking students have language and vocabulary deficits; teachers cite the Cajun dialect as an element in the inferior results students achieve on traditional grammar exercises. According to Cox, teachers feel that their students' deficiencies are caused by "lack of travel, few books in the home, and the speech patterns of the parents" ("Educative" 2).

In 1992 a special issue of the *Louisiana English Journal*, entitled *Cajun English: Informal English in French Louisiana* was published for the purpose of explaining language use and variation in south Louisiana. As Ann Martin Scott, the editor of the special issue, indicates in the "Preface," the work began with a shared interest in Cajun English among the participants. The work inadvertently follows the earlier work of researchers, containing articles that examine word use, phonology and syntax, language history, and social attitudes. Scott emphasizes that language educators in Louisiana are the intended audience for the work rather than the academic linguistic community and expresses the desire that these educators will use this information to create teaching methodologies appropriate for students' native dialects.

In the first of the essays of this anthology, "I Say 'Tomaytoe'; You Say 'Tomahtoe': Variation and Change in Language," Sherri L. Condon and R. Mark Smith discuss the principles of general linguistics, covering the general conventions of linguistics and sociolinguistics. Their mention of Cajun English notes how it is like other dialects in that it is systematic and rule governed. These writers also place Cajun English "geographically," specifying that the vernacular is found in South Louisiana, part of a major dialect region called the Lower South. Cajun English

contrasts greatly with the surrounding varieties, a product of the unique history of Cajun English speakers. According to Condon and Smith, Cajun English seems to have had little influence on other varieties in the region which is unlike the process of change found among other varieties. This may be caused by the history of insularity of Cajun English speakers (10). However, as shown by the earlier work of Babington and Atwood, and Barnhill, there is some evidence of Cajun English lexical terms being used in by speakers in the surrounding region.

The second essay, "A Brief History of the Acadian Migration to Louisiana and the Development of Cajun English," by R. Mark Smith, succinctly describes the history of the Acadian people, placing the origins of Cajun English in an historical context. Smith identifies the French influence on Cajun English, and endeavors to explain the progression of English influence into the French-speaking region.

In the third essay, "Some Phonological and Syntactic Characteristics of Cajun English," Ann Martin Scott describes some of the phonological and syntactic rules that govern Cajun English. She discusses the phonological and syntactic features of Cajun English by illustrating the stress and intonation patterns of Cajun English noting the characteristic "sound and melody" that distinguishes it from other English dialects and remarking on how the intonation and stress patterns of Cajun English differ from that of English. French and Cajun English share an end of sentence stress pattern. Scott believes this influence produces "a somewhat clipped, staccato sound with natural emphasis falling at the end of the sentence" ("Characteristics" 27-8). In discussing the phonetic qualities of Cajun English, Scott infers that the phonetic features of Cajun English come from Cajun French. Phonologically, the most obvious characteristic of Cajun English seems to be the absence of what Scott refers to as "the *th* sound" -- both the voiced and the voiceless interdental fricatives, a characteristic noted repeatedly by earlier researchers. Scott records another conspicuous phonetic characteristic in the Cajun English use of *ax* /æks/ for *ask*. In discussing vowel sounds, Scott mentions a general movement from a lax mid front vowel /ɛ/ to a lax low front vowel /æ/ that she notes is found in both Cajun English and Cajun French (Cajun French), influencing the pronunciation of Standard American English (Standard English) words such as *hair*

/hær/ and Cajun English borrowings from Cajun French as *cher* /sæ/. Diphthongs seem absent from Cajun English, in particular a tense low back vowel /ay/, which is understandable considering that French has no diphthongs. In Cajun English a tense low back vowel /ay/ shifts to a lax low back vowel /ɑ/ with words like *time* being pronounced /tɑm/ (31).

Scott examines the difference in question formation found between Cajun English and Standard English, coming to the general conclusion that Cajun English question formation is greatly influenced by French question formation rules. Scott also notes the lack of emphatic *do* in Cajun English, stating that Cajun English uses the tags *yes* and *no* at the end of positive and negative declarative sentences in combination with a stress on the final word of the sentence and falling intonation on the tag, or adds the appropriate objective case pronoun to the end of the sentence to produce emphasis. This rule differs when the subject of the sentence is a pronoun; then the objective case pronoun is added to the beginning of the sentence. Cajun English also combines these two emphatic formations for "greater emphasis": *"Him*, he didn't kill that duck, *no"* ("Characteristics" 35). Scott concludes her article with an emphasis on a need for teachers to know their students' vernaculars and to promote students' pride in their ethnic identity while helping students to learn Standard American English.

The fourth essay in the collection, "Lexical Choice in Cajun Vernacular English" by Donald A. Gill and me, discusses the influence of Cajun French on the word choice and idiom formation of Cajun English speakers. There are two major forms of Cajun French influence in Cajun English: "literal translations . . . from Cajun French and the direct use of Cajun French words." The article begins with a brief discussion of reasons why Cajun French is considered a lexical influence on Cajun English, and then moves into a classification of the different types of influence, beginning with what the authors call "Idioms Derived from Literal Translation." These are defined as "certain turns of phrase which are direct results of literal translation of Cajun French" (39). In this section verb phrases, prepositions, and definite articles as they are used in Cajun English are compared to how they are used in Standard English, and how the Cajun English uses are derived from Cajun French. The second section of the essay contains a list of Cajun French words with meanings and

explanations on their use in Cajun English. We note interesting uses of the words and the addition of regular Standard American English inflectional endings to French verbs, as in adding *-ed* to *roder* (to roam) to make the past tense *roder-ed* (49). The third section of the essay examines what we call "idiomatic institutions" as taken from Adam Makki's *Idiom Structure in English*.[3] These idioms are divided into five categories: clichés, quotations, phrases of politeness or greeting, terms of endearment or informal address, and terms of derision or cursing. Gill and I define each category including examples and explanations of the meaning and use of each example (50-55).

"Language Attitudes in Acadiana," the next essay in the collection, is a joint project by Sherri L. Condon and Pamela T. Pittman. This article is similar to the earlier work of Carpenter in that it reports the results of a study on the attitudes of informants towards Cajun English, Cajun French, Standard American English, and Cajun-accented Standard American English by using a matched guise test involving a recording of speakers of the four dialects. The authors asked the respondents to evaluate each speaker's general knowledge, reliability, honesty, friendliness, attractiveness, and desirability as a friend (Condon and Pittman 56-58). Overall, they find that the Standard English speaker rated highest in all categories, with the Cajun-accented Standard English speaker second. Both speakers are considered to be more prosperous and learned than the other speakers by the informants. However, the Cajun English and Cajun French speakers had high ratings in friendliness, honesty, desirability as friend, and friendliness, indicating that the informants relate well to these speakers.

In the discussion, Condon and Pittman do acknowledge two problems they encountered in gathering their data, the first being the inability to indicate whether the informant was illiterate, and the second, that there was no "Black English" vernacular sample available which would have allowed informants to discern the difference between Cajun English and African American English--an oversight that might account for the 7% of informants who "marked the Cajun English speaker as ethnically Black" (70). The researchers conclude that the groups recognize the economic value and prestige of Standard English, yet do not extend these judgments to interpersonal relationships indicating that the respondents do accept their heritage (71).

The next article in *Cajun English: Informal English in French Louisiana*, "North and South Louisiana: Are We Really So Different?" is an effort by Mary Marcotte to determine the perceived "dividing line" between residents of North and South Louisiana. By performing a random survey of residents in two neighboring parishes, Avoyelles and Rapides (the former is considered an "Acadiana" parish), Marcotte endeavors to determine the relationship of geography to language differences in the area. Using the parish line dividing these areas, which connects the Red River and Bayou Bouef (the parish line runs north to south and is the eastern boundary of Avoyelles, the western boundary of Rapides), Marcotte provided questionnaires to informants on either side of the line. Marcotte's results indicate that most of the informants agreed that the current boundary line adequately represents a geographical division between the two cultural/language groups. In noting informants' attitudes towards language change in the area, Marcotte states that Avoyelles, the "Acadiana" parish, has made the biggest degree of language change, making communication easier, but not necessarily bringing neighbors from the adjoining parishes closer together. As part of the study, Marcotte also asked informants about the terminology used to indicate residents of North Louisiana and South Louisiana. Overwhelmingly, respondents called northern residents "rednecks" and southern residents "Cajuns" or "coonasses" (78).[4] Informants considered none of the terms to be derogatory. This is an interesting result as earlier research from Carpenter and others indicates that Cajuns were once considered to be an undesirable minority in the state.

The next article in the anthology, "I Pledge Allegiance Too, Cher!," by Sherry D. LeBlanc, recounts interviews with older Cajun English speakers explaining their experiences with learning English in the Louisiana public school system during the first part of the twentieth century. Relating the history of education among Cajuns in South Louisiana between 1919 and 1941, LeBlanc explains how early twentieth century versions of the state constitution emphasized lesson instruction in English as a response to the "revival of Anglo-American middle-class values," and discouraged the use of French in classrooms and playgrounds. LeBlanc notes that the rush for English language education caused resentment and anguish. LeBlanc's informants report punishments for speaking French on school grounds, an act that seemed pervasive throughout

South Louisiana as educators seemed committed to "'Anglicizing' French Louisiana" (87-88). Informants indicate that they were made to feel ashamed of their heritage, and did not teach their children French because of this. LeBlanc concludes that most of her informants now regret denying their children part of their Cajun heritage by not teaching them Cajun French (90-91).

The final article in the collection, "Language Education in Acadiana," by the editor, Ann Martin Scott, discusses the need for educators in Louisiana to understand how nonstandard dialects differ from what Scott refers to as "prestige dialects"so that educators may better comprehend "the implications of modern linguistic knowledge for education in South Louisiana" ("Education" 95). Scott proposes "an improved language program" for Louisiana based on more linguistic theory-oriented program that would educate both adults and children in basic linguistic concepts and that would encourage a more liberal approach to language learning (98-99). Scott believes that these changes can only take effect if educators are properly trained in fundamental linguistic principles, and if educators in South Louisiana are familiarized with the characteristics of Cajun English and Cajun French.

The publication of *Cajun English: Informal English in French Louisiana* inspired more research in the study of Cajun English. Sherri Condon and Pamela Pittman presented their research on "Language Attitudes in Southern Louisiana" at the International Congress of Linguists in Quebec, Canada. This presentation, which was published in the conference proceedings in 1992, uses the same data collected for their article in *Cajun English: Informal English in French Louisiana*, and presents the same conclusions. This presentation is significant, however, because it brings the study of Cajun English to an international audience.

Another presentation, "Current Research in Cajun English," by contributors to *Cajun English: Informal English in French Louisiana*, was given at Language and Variation in the South/Southeastern Conference on Linguistics (LAVIS/SECOL) in 1993. Ann Martin Scott, Sherri Condon, and I presented some of the findings from *Cajun English: Informal English in French Louisiana*, as well as new conclusions based on the data collected by Condon and Pittman concerning the differences between Cajun and Non-Cajun respondents and Black and Non-Black

respondents. The purpose of the presentation was primarily to bring awareness of the research possibilities in Cajun English to the audience.

One article that appeared soon after the LAVIS/SECOL presentation is Connie Eble's "Prolegomenon to the Study of Cajun English," published in *The SECOL Review*. Eble briefly examines the "triglossic web" of Louisiana Creole, Cajun French, and English, using her discussion as a call for more research into English use in South Louisiana ("Prolegemenon" 167). Eble completes the essay by doing the same for English in South Louisiana, claiming that "Almost nothing scholarly has been written [on Cajun English]. No one disputes its existence" (171). Eble reviews scholarly work performed before *Cajun English: Informal English in French Louisiana*, and then, after discussing *Cajun English*, points out the resevoir of information available in the *Basic Materials of the Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States* (*LAGS*) (172-73). Eble states that these materials could be used to describe the phonology and lexicon of Cajun English.

Michael D. Picone reviewed *Cajun English: Informal English in French Louisiana* for the *Journal of Pidgen and Creole Languages*, discussing the relationships between the reviewed work and the study of pidgin and creole languages. Picone points out discrepancies in the work while acknowledging that it is not an exhaustive study of Cajun English. Picone concludes the article with the statement that "*Cajun English* [has] rendered an important service to education in Louisiana. . . . to further the cause of human dignity and mutual understanding by engendering respect for linguistic diversity" (357).

Jonathan S. Cullick, a graduate student at the University of Kentucky, has also contributed some scholarship to the study of Cajun English. In an unpublished paper entitled "The Development of Cajun English in South Louisiana," Cullick examines "the French influence upon phonological and syntactic characteristcs of CE [Cajun English] so as to suggest directions for future primary research" (1). Primarily a review of available materials such as the *Dictionary of American Regional English* and the *Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States*, Cullick discusses the "linguistic mixture" of the area, much as Connie Eble does in "Prolegomenon," and the linguistic consequences of that mixture to the development to English. Cullick also reviews the social

consequences of language development in South Louisiana, drawing on the work of Condon and Pittman, and Marshall. Cullick's review of the phonological and syntactic features of Cajun English supports the views of earlier researchers that Cajun English is heavily influenced by French. Cullick uses examples from his own knowledge of French and from scholars who have previously examined Cajun English to support his conclusions concerning Cajun English phonology and syntax. Cullick concludes his paper with a return to his earlier emphasis on the uniqueness of Cajun English as a dialect of American English and the need to study the variety in more detail.

The latest "large" work to be completed in the study of Cajun English is a 1994 disseration, "Flat Speech and Cajun Ethnic Identity in Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana," by Shana Walton, an anthopology student at Tulane University. Walton combines direct observation and data collection with analysis of language case studies based on recorded oral histories and a quantitative matched guise in order to determine if Cajun English is an ethnic marker among self-identified Cajuns. In her linguistic analysis of speech in Terrebonne parish, Walton decides to use the term "flat speech" or "talking flat" to refer to the Cajun English dialect as these are the terms the informants use to describe their own speech. Walton also makes the point at this time that while this dialect has been attributed to intereference from Cajun French, it is not a transitional dialect from French to English as most of the speakers do not speak Cajun French (92-93). The linguistic analysis covers aspects of phonology, morphology, syntax, and discourse. Walton does not cover lexical items. A distinctive feature of the dialect that Walton notes is *liaison*, the carrying over of a final consonant sound to become the initial sound of the next word. Walton records a high number of incidents of this feature among her informants, especially among words with word-final consonant clusters, and theorizes that it may be a French influenced characteristic (105). In recording the stress and intonation patterns of her informants, Walton concludes that the stress pattern is similar to that of Cajun French: stressed syllables are not as long as those of English, and the stress falls on the last word or word group of the phrase. Walton notes that her speakers were multi-registral, with their degree of "flatness" varying depending upon the discourse situation (113). She also examines

"performance" of the dialect put on for outsiders, and the information and nuances shared among speakers during a discourse event containing only dialect speakers.

Walton draws a key conclusion from her analysis concerning the language use of her informants: "I now believe that education is key[:] how language or dialect use is realized as a function of ethnic identity: education level" (123). While this not a clear statement, what Walton is implying is that education level is a strong indicator of dialect use, especially as a function of ethnic identity. As Walton realizes later in the dissertation, when she discusses her speakers for her matched guise study, better educated Cajuns have an ability to change dialects and registers to accomodate the cultural situation in which they find themselves. Overall, Walton finds that people do connect the dialect to Cajun identity, which is supported primarily by the oral histories she analyzed and her personal observations.

By examining the research presented above, it is possible to come to some general conclusions concerning the characteristics of Cajun English. Phonetically, the most distinguishing characteristics of the dialect seem to be the replacement of the voiceless interdental fricative /θ/ with the voiceless alveolar stop /t/ and the voiced interdental fricative /ð/ with the voiced alveolar stop /d/; the general lack of some diphthongs; and the use of suprasegmental phonemes (pitch and stress) that differ from those used in Southern or Standard English and which seem similar to French suprasegmental phonemes (that "flat" quality that Walton's informants speak of). Morphologically, there seems to be some agreement that the *-s* suffix is generally dropped from some possessive nouns, plural nouns, and third person singular verbs. However, this is a characteristic than can also be said of other varieties, such as African American English. There is some agreement among the researchers that the strongest syntactic element is found in the formation of tag questions (see LeCompte and Scott). The number of word list-based materials show that Cajun English does have a lexicon that is particular to the dialect, and which may be its most distinguishing feature (besides the suprasegmental phonemes). The attitude surveys and discussions of the social significance of the dialect show that it is an ethnic marker for Cajuns. Social attitudes towards the dialect have changed from negative connotations towards speakers of

the dialect to a more tolerant acceptance of the dialect, with the dialect even becoming a signifier of acceptance within the group. The origins of Cajun English are well understood as a by-product of Louisiana educational and constitutional law in the early part of the 20th century which demanded the instruction of English in schools. Cajun French-speaking children combined elements of their native tongue with English, developing a dialect of English which is considered by the majority of researchers above to be heavily influenced by Cajun French.

While there are some points of disagreement between researchers, all seem to come to the conclusion that Cajun English is an interesting and significant American dialect. For educators, working with students who use this dialect means being open to understanding the cultural biases that are associated with any dialect. Incorporating an understanding of different varieties of English and the appropriateness of their use into the language arts curriculum can help speakers of dialects understand the origins of their language and the significance it plays in their lives. It can also help to alleviate the prejudice often leveled at dialect speakers.

Notes

[1]At this point it must be made clear that earlier in *Applied Phonetics* Wise discusses Southern American English and its "substandard" versions on pages 205-20. While Wise's comments on standard and substandard dialects sound prejudicial, at the time he was writing such prejudice was the norm among speech researchers.

[2]As Creole French is a primarily African-American dialect, it must be noted that this is a common trait among most varieties of African American English (Black English or Ebonics).

[3]Makki defines *idiomatic institutions* as "expressions which are accepted by the speaking public or social group as the norm and which have an understood meaning to the group" (Makki 160). Cheramie and Gill claim this term applies to these French phrases because they "have functioned as units for such a long time that they have become unacceptable in any other form" (Cheramie and Gill 50).

[4]According to the *Dictionary of American Regional English*, *coonass*, a term which designates a person of Acadian heritage, is derived from the French slang *con-asse*, a derogatory term for "vagina" (764). However, this definition is controversial, and there are many different opinions as to the origin of this term.

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